

MINUTES  
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS  
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL BUDGET STUDY SESSION MEETING  
CITY HALL – COMMUNITY ROOM  
MAY 16, 2023 – 6:00PM

The special budget study session meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Barnett at 6:05pm.

Council Members Present: Barnett, Boleware, Bruce, Knol (arrived at 6:29), Massey and Newlin

Council Members Absent: Bridges

Others Present: City Manager Mekjian, City Clerk Smith, Assistant City Manager Valentine, Directors Harvey, Mondora, Monico, Skrobola and Winn

City Manager Mekjian outlined staff's recommendation for additional staffing for the Police and Fire Departments discussed at last night's budget session and funding based on Council's direction at that time. Considerable discussion was held on the appropriate number of staffing for each department and how those positions would be funded.

Council consensus was to include in the budget 8 additional positions for the Fire Department with the caveat that no additional personnel will be granted in FY 24/25 budget and 3 additional positions for the Police Department.

Finance Director Skrobola stated that the public safety millage could probably fund the majority of those positions and that he would suggest including two of the fire department positions in the general fund for now with the understanding that staff would continue to research increasing EMS fees as another source of funding.

Director Skrobola also reported to Council based on an inquiry at last night's budget session that the 4% healthcare costs for active employees totals \$170,000 overall in the budget.

**CENTRAL SERVICES/SUPPORT SERVICES/RELATED CAPITAL**

Kelly Monico, Director of Central Services, explained that the Central Services Department supports approximately 750 employees in two cities and the 47<sup>th</sup> District Court. Some of the current projects include:

- Disasters recovery module
- Upgrading operating systems to windows 11 on over 600 workstations
- Supporting virtual work for employees out in the field
- Installation of cameras at city buildings
- The new ERP and HR module software installation
- SMART cities efforts including signage and lighting throughout the city
- Citizen Problem Solver
- Interactive maps for various departments and resident use
- Land/lease for cellular towers
- Various bid project
- Lead agency for purchasing rock salt

- Business outreach efforts – How to do Business with the City of Farmington Hills
- Website and social media oversight
- City Mail

Director Monico noted that the city is currently reviewing a single sign-on platform for all payments with the city so residents will have a single log in to pay for recreation programs, taxes, permits, etc.

**Council questions, comments and suggestions:**

- Would like to continue security mentor training. Staff noted that they will continue the trainings but are looking into another module to keep training fresh as they have completed trainings through Security Mentor
- Would like to see website platform updated. Staff indicated that this is on the Communication Director's agenda in next year or so
- Inquired if there was a way to create an entity or middle manager to handle credit card payments to reduce fees currently absorbed by the city. Staff indicated that this would need to be a state-wide model with mandatory participation by municipalities. Staff is also reviewing current fees charged in order to cover some city costs
- Council was supportive of the single sign-on for all city payments

**HUMAN RESOURCES**

Lori Brown, Director of Human Resources, reported that her department processed 1506 applications last FY and hired 36 full-time and 153 part-time staff since July 1, 2022. Recruitment continues to be a challenge due to sparse pool of applicants and a competitive market.

Other highlights include:

- 18 planned retirements are included in the budget
- The city switched its occupational health partner from Ascension to Henry Ford
- The department has a new employee, Kelly Ingram
- The outstanding employee annual awards ceremony is planned for Monday, May 22nd
- The city is implementing a new human resources software, NEOGOV that will be used for onboarding and training.
- Department account increases include personnel testing, advertising recruitment and consultants to assist with updating policies and job descriptions for the new software system
- Physical exams have increased under Henry Ford
- Additional office furniture is being purchased for staff changes.

Director Brown commented that Human Resources is evolving. In response to Council, she noted that trades are a difficult position to fill as there are not many people getting into those fields any longer and Michigan needs more programs to develop students in these areas. The city is reviewing the potential for city internship/apprenticeship programs with the DEI Director. She feels recruitment continues to be a challenge for many reasons including COVID creating the desire and ability to work from home, generational changes where Gen Z's are more entrepreneurs and don't typically want a 9am-5pm job. Retention is also a challenge and Gen Z's are more transient than past generations that might stay with a company for 25+ years.

Council questioned the salary study that was supposed to be completed last year. Assistant City Manager Joe Valentine stated that the study conducted was complete but was not a comprehensive study and only focused on certain positions and left gaps so staff is now working on a comprehensive salary study.

**Council questions, comments and suggestions:**

- The city needs to do a better job at marketing public sector jobs
- Suggestion to consider an apprenticeship program within the city
- Request to add the following goal: Work with department heads on succession planning and cross-training between departments

**CITY CLERK**

City Clerk Smith noted that the department budget includes the retirement of two staff members, the City Clerk and Voter Registration Coordinator.

She outlined the following increases proposed for the department budget:

- Legal notices are increasing due to the need to switch from publishing in the Observer that is no longer distributing newspapers in the area to Oakland Press
- Consultant fees - a per meeting increase is being requested for recording secretarial services to keep those rates in line with other communities
- Several election related accounts are also increasing in anticipation of the implementation of Proposal 2 that includes 9 days of early voting; vendor increases for supplies and services and rental fees for precinct locations
- The Clerk's Office purchased a new software through IT budget this year to assist with scheduling and processing payroll spreadsheets for election inspectors. The annual fee maintenance fee will be paid from the City Clerk's budget going forward
- The largest increase is a request for an increase in election inspector compensation. Election inspectors have not received a raise since 2016 and they are often working 14.5-16+ hour days. This is included in the proposed budget but will also come before City Council at the next regular meeting for consideration

City Clerk Smith also mentioned that due to legislation changes allowing for military and overseas ballots to be counted up to 6 days following Election Day as long as the ballots were postmarked by Election Day, Elections may not be certified as quickly as they were in the past including this year's local Election. This change could affect the swearing in day for Mayor and City Council and that will most likely take place the second meeting in November following the Election rather than the first meeting. This is still consistent with the City Charter as the Charter states that the Mayor and Council shall take office effective at the first regularly scheduled meeting following certification of the Election.

Clerk Smith also mentioned the overtime that is required of her office, including the Clerk and Deputy Clerk which is not reflected in the budget as they are not paid for over time, but which is 100+ hours per Election. She mentioned that her succession plan will be brought to City Council in the near future.

**PUBLIC SERVICES/MUNICIPAL STREET FUND/MAJOR AND LOCAL ROAD FUNDS/RELATED CAPITAL**

Karen Mondora, Public Services Director, mentioned the following highlights for the Public Services budget:

- Operating budget remains flat
- The department has a robust major and local road program with the millages in place. The 2014 road millage renewal will be up for renewal in 2024 and is targeted for the November, 2024 ballot
- The 2023 pacer ratings have been completed for the roads

- There are a number of federal grants available for 2024 that the city is seeking
- The road maintenance and supervision account is proposed to decrease in FY 23/24 due to an anticipated painting project that was initially in the capital budget but was completed this year so there is an increase this year and then it will go back down to the normal range
- Salt usage is decreasing due to the use of liquid and anti-icing
- The Building Maintenance Supervisor is retiring so there is an increase in sick/vacation for that division

Council inquired about meetings with developers and various staff members to discuss proposed development projects and the process with the city. Director Mondora responded that her department has a standing meeting every Tuesday as a placeholder to meet with developers and that is typically coordinated through Tia, the Economic Development Coordinator and encouraged through Planning staff as well.

Derrick Schueller, DPW Superintendent, commented on the waste collection and challenges in moving to a new waste hauler but they are meeting with the company monthly and are hoping to see more improvements. He noted that the previous waste hauler, Waste Management, is focusing more on businesses and their rates have increased significantly. Staff did not feel this is a service that should be handled in-house due to all that is involved with having to get equipment, mechanics, environmental issues, etc.

City Manager Mekjian commented on the on-line reporting module and stated that he would send that link to City Council so they could see how that service works.

### **CAPITAL REQUESTS**

Director Mondora stated that in the last FY budget she requested \$6 million in drain funding but a couple of projects had to be moved forward as they were based on other projects such as gravel road conversion projects that didn't have enough support of the residents or Woodcreek that requires easements to be granted from residents. She mentioned that a grant request was submitted for the Caddell drain crossing at Nine Mile and Drake Roads

### **SIDEWALKS AND DPW EQUIPMENT AND PUBLIC FACILITIES**

Director Mondora reviewed the proposed sidewalk projects.

DPW Superintendent Schueller noted that the fueling stations at DPW will be under construction this winter to remove the old fueling pumps with remediation and install a new 12,000 gallon above ground tank.

Discussion was held on electric vehicle (EV) stations and potential funding.

### **Council questions, comments and suggestions:**

- Need to develop a plan to address clearing the drainage system with riparian homeowners – suggested viewing options including a special assessment district
- Requested timing of lights at certain locations need to be longer – WB 12 Mile to SB Orchard Lake Road and at Ice Arena in particular. Mark Saksewski, Traffic Engineer, would review those locations.

- Council commented on the many complaints still be received about the waste hauler and questioned the education for residents. Staff suggested that if a house is missed, the homeowner leave their garbage or recycling at the curb and contact DPW so they can get the waste hauler back out as soon as possible
- Request to review grant opportunities for EV stations and be sure to contract with a good service provider for maintenance. Staff indicated they are reviewing all options – leasing, owning, partnering with the county, free stations provided and maintained, etc.
- Council consensus was they would not object to receiving free EV stations in exchange for allowing the dealership that provided the stations to advertise on the units; but confirmed they want standardized units.
- A sun dial was suggested for the city gateway signage at the Orchard Lake Road bridge.

### **BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS/CITY COUNCIL/CITY ADMINISTRATION/COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Director Skrobola explained that \$2,500 was allocated to all boards and commissions and a balance remains to be allocated as needed, per the direction of City Council.

Councilmember Knol expressed the need for more funding for the Historic District Commission for cemetery and headstone repairs.

Discussion was held on the eliminating the funding and line item in the budget for the Multi-Cultural/Multi-Racial Community Council (MCMR) and creating a similar commission under the city boards and commissions ordinance.

#### **Boards and Commissions**

##### **Council questions, comments and suggestions:**

- Consensus to budget additional \$10,000 for next 3 years over and above \$2,500 for the Historic District Commission for cemetery headstone repairs
- Eliminate funding and line item for Multi-Cultural/Multi-Racial Community Council and start the process of creating a similar board/commission under the city that is standardized as other board/commissions with Farmington and Farmington Hills members and the DEI Director serving as staff liaison
- Earmark \$2,500 for benches for the Arts Commission

#### **City Council**

City Manager Mekjian stated that the budget includes a wage increase for City Council based on the CPI increase as of July 1, 2023. Conferences have increased due to once again becoming a member of National League of Cities (NLC) and participating in those conferences. He noted that the miscellaneous line item has increased due to funding the master plan and 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

##### **Council questions, comments and suggestions:**

- Add West Bloomfield to the 5<sup>th</sup> bullet under City Council performance objectives

#### **City Administration**

City Manager Mekjian stated that this budget includes the new DEI Director position and he introduced Latoya Harvey, DEI Director, to talk about her role and projects she has been working on in the city.

Director Harvey updated Council on the DEI efforts in working with Consultant Darlene King and the city's focus groups and department heads. She stated that the DEI Council made up of city employees has formalized a code of conduct and plan to meet monthly and there will be a strategy session with Darlene King next month.

She noted that she has also been working on the following:

- Education and employee training programs to include new hire training and to formalize annual training for all staff that will eventually be tracked through NEOGOV
- New hire recruitment process starting in August that will be held monthly and include a power point put together with information provided by all departments and a brief presentation by each department head
- Professional development plans
- Community alignment with the schools, YMCA, MCMR, etc. She has met with Farmington Public Schools and OCC to date and has worked on connecting DPW with the schools automotive programs.

**Council questions, comments and suggestions:**

- Request for the DEI Director to also reach out to other school districts in the city including Walled Lake, Clarenceville, Mercy and Oakland as part of her outreach

**Communications and Community Engagement**

City Manager Mekjian stated that this new position was added as a goal of City Council. Vickie Sullen-Winn, Director of Communications and Community Engagement, started in November, 2022. He explained the history of what used to be the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission and how that dissolved and staff came to be placed over at the HAWK. He stated that Assistant City Manager Valentine began monthly meetings with the video division approximately last June so that there was a clear understanding that staff would be under the direction of the new Communications Director. A couple months after Director Winn started, she met with Ellen to begin standing up the department.

Discussion was held on how this position was rolled out to other staff and Department Heads. Council did not have a clear understanding that this would be a new Director position and while there may be a need for this position, perhaps the video division staff did not need to be under this Director. Comments were made about the different types of communication and whether those should all be under the same "umbrella". Others remarked that consistency with marketing and branding is important.

Director Sullen-Winn reviewed the following with City Council with regard to her department:

- Mission Statement
- Team members – it was noted that staff was not physically moving to city hall but would remain at the HAWK and Vickie works from that location at times during the week so there is staff engagement weekly
- Department functions
- Interna/external operations that are supported by her department
- Core strategies and tactics including branding "One Farmington Hills", reviewing two-way feedback with staff, offering more equitable communication support, a Team tour with departments to better understand their needs and elevating visibility of high-priority departments and marketing the HAWK (this is the media buying that is coming back to Council for consideration). Tactics would include owned advertising such as the website, FAlert, Facebook, Twitter; earned advertising such as broadcast media, printed news and radio and paid advertising that includes digital and traditional advertising.

Director Sullen-Winn presented Council with samples of advertisements and marketing and money spent by other communities.

Discussion was held on what the city would be marketing. Director Skrobola offered that the final draft of the Sports Facilities Company report outlines the revenue from all programs and where the city should focus.

**Council questions, comments and suggestions:**

- Consensus to discuss the media buying consultant at Monday's meeting when the contract will be before Council again for consideration and whether to budget the full \$150,000 initially requested. Council suggested for one year to start in order to get metrics. City Manager Mekjian suggested authorizing him to expend "up to" \$150,000. Staff stated metrics could be provided as campaigns are pushed out. Council would further discuss the options outlined Monday night.

**FINANCE/POST EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS/INTER-FUND TRANSFERS/DEBT FUNDS**

**Finance**

- Director Skrobola confirmed he is not increasing staff levels
- The annual audit increased slightly
- The budget included a one-time study when the city transitioned back to defined benefit plans and that line item will go back down some but more studies may be needed in the future as the city continues to transition
- A few positions have been upgraded

**Brownfield Redevelopment Authority**

The Authority adopted their budget and all districts are not capturing funding

**Grand River Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA)**

The CIA adopted their first budget and the EDC is providing ideas to the authority for what that corridor could potentially look like

**Post-Employment Benefits**

It was noted there was a one year hiatus on contributions due to the transition to defined benefit

**Inter-fund Transfers**

There was a one year hold as drain projects that were originally included in the CIP did not move forward but that will go up as projects are added back in.

**Debt Funds**

The city has issued no new debt this year but future years will include the drain projects mentioned. It was noted that the \$7 million bond approved by Council has been fully allocated.

**CITY MANAGER WRAP UP**

City Manager Mekjian noted that the Communications Department will be bringing to City Council in the near future a communications policy for the city.

**Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

**Adjournment**

The special budget study session adjourned at 10:42pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Smith', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Pamela B. Smith, City Clerk